

Gazwah Khyber (Muharram 7th Hijrah year)

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One of the prominent Gazwah after Hudabiyah is Khyber. History records it equally prominent as Ahzaab because the plot of Ahzaab was basically hatched in Khyber, thus it is a continuation of the same series. They were left unattended till now because more powerful enemy, Quraish had engaged Muslims and the later entered into a peace treaty with Muslims at Hudabiyah which proved a great victory for Muslims. Quran also testifies it a great victory.¹ Thus to avoid confrontation with Khyber it was necessary to deal with more powerful enemy who were at war with Muslims from the day first. Treaty of Hudabiyah has provided an opportunity to propagate message to foreign world on one side and on the other side all those plot hatched, who always create tension and chaos among Muslims by instigating and stimulating other tribes against the Prophet of Islam were to be dealt with.

More strong party of the Ahzaab, Quraish were cut short by Muslims in the battle of Ditch along with Banu Quraidha and now there left only one group, who hatched all the mission and they were living in Khyber. The Prophet after Hudabiya in the month of Muharram 7th Hijrah asked the companions to move to Khyber, only those were allowed who are sincere in the cause of Allah. Thus all those who participated in Bait-i Ridhwan moved to Khyber. Exegetes wrote that the land of Khyber was promised to the Prophet² Selective people were taken to Khyber, only those who participated in Bait-i Ridhwan because Madinah at that time was inhabited by munafiqeen also who were internally supporting the cause of the Jewes of Khyber that is why every one was not allowed to participate as they may create any problem for the cause. Quran has beautifully mentioned there non participation in Khyber.³

سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انطَلَقْتُمْ إِلَى مَغَائِمٍ لِنَأْخُذْهَا ذُرُوءًا تَتَّبِعُكُمْ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا كَلِمَ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا عَذَابُ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَفْصِلُونَا بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

Those who lagged behind (will say) when ye (are free to) march and take booty (in war): "Permit us to follow you." They wish to change Allah's decree: Say: "Not thus will ye follow us: Allah has already declared (this) beforehand": then they will say "but ye are jealous of us." Nay but little do they understand (such things). (48:15)

Khyber was a center of Jewish power in Arabia, Jews of Banu Nadhir were also banished from Madinah to Khyber. They took their abode there and started a series of conspiracies against Islam and Muslims of which battle of Khandaq was one of the examples. One of their chiefs, Hayy b. Akhtab was killed in the battle with Banu Quraidha because he along with some others had gone to Makkah and with the help of Quraish stirred up a strong revolt from one end of Arabia to the other and that revolt had actually stormed Madinan, the very center of Islam but with the grace of Allah it failed but the force then at work were still operative from their stronghold in Khyber.

The Jews of Khyber now again started to hatch plot in collaboration with Gatfan and they were also well informed about the activities of the Muslims through the hypocrites. The Prophet had a wish to have a treaty with these people also and Abdullah b. Rawaha was deputed to Khyber for asking the Jews to come to an agreement. Meanwhile an arch hypocrite Abdullah b. Ubay informed them that the Prophet was planning an attack with some unarmed handful of Muslims, no match to your power and wealth. Having received the message of Abdullah b. Ubay they deputed a delegation to Gatfan to join them in the attack on Madinah and also promised them half of the yield.⁴

March to Khyber

All the battles fought were defensive, and the battle of Khyber was the first of its kind when non-believers were made citizens of the state. Prophet was intending to enter into an agreement with them but they came up with arms and also invited Ghatfan for an attack on Madinah. Prophet wrote to Banu Fazara of Ghatfan tribe to remain away from the battle and they would be given their due share. Prophet on learning the situation, that the Jews were planning to besiege Madinah, hastened to cross the distance within three days. Jews remain unaware of their move until Muslim forces stood at the gates of Khyber. On morning when they came out of their houses they found Muslims have besieged them and they cried that there is Muhammad and his army.⁵

Forts of Khyber

وَأَوْرَثَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا لَمْ تَطَّوْهَا ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا

And He made you heirs of their lands their houses and their goods and of a land which ye had not frequented (before). And Allah has power over all things. (33:27) ⁶

Historian's mentioned that Jews had some eight forts in Khyber in three different areas⁷-Natatah, as-Shaqq and al - Kateebah- and the forts are Na'im, Sa'ab b. Muadh and Qalasah in the area of Natatah, Abi and Nizar in the area of as-Shaqq and Qamus, Watih and Salalim in the area of al – Kateebah.

At Khyber Prophet wanted to enter into a peace agreement with Jews but they remain adhere to fight and started war preparations against Muslims at a greater scale which ruled out any such course. The Prophet then called companions and delivered a sermon instigating them for war against the people of Khyber. The fort of Na'im was the first to be attacked by the Muslims as it was strategically very important. Muhammad b. Maslamah launched a powerful attack on Na'im and because of excessive heat fight was stopped for a moment. He was martyred by rolling a grinding stone when he was taking shade on wall side⁸, then after fort was soon taken with enormous booty. After storming the fort of Na'im with heavy battle from both sides leaving many wounded and the killing of Sallam b. Mishkam and finally its fall in the hands of Muslims. Later then directed themselves towards other forts. Then after all the forts fall one by one with slight resistance but Qamus had given tough fighting. It was the seat of Marhab, strongest among Jews. Qamus was the strongest of all the forts. Ibn al- Haqiq and his tribe were residing in this fort. He was one of those who instigated and stirred whole Arab against Muslims in the battle of Ahzaab. Marhab, famous warrior of the Jews was also residing in Qamus as mentioned by some narrators. Narrations even differ on who killed Marhab and the famous narrations opine that Hadhrat Ali killed him.⁹

In this battle the meat of donkey was forbidden instead of it horse meat was permitted. Narrators mentioned that when Prophet allowed Muslims to slaughter horse in order to quench the hunger. Muslims noticed that a heard of sheep entering in one of the forts of Khyber, soon launched an attack and get two sheep which were consumed by the Muslim army.

Muslims on reaching Khyber had besieged fort of Naim, after the fall of Na'im all the forts with small resistance fall one by one and some of them surrendered before the Prophet in order to attain security of their lives. In such a desperate condition Jews reached on the terms of surrender and Prophet accepted their plea and permitted them to stay on their land. The terms of surrender provided half of the produce of the land as a labour charge to them and the rest will go to Islamic exchequer, except Fadak which is solely for the Prophet as when the Jews surrendered before the Prophet people of Fadak became so panic at their surrender, they too agreed to pay the half of their wealth without fighting when Prophet sent a message to the people of Fadak to surrender their properties. The wealth of khyber was to be distributed among the companions according to rule as they fought to secure it and the wealth of the Fadak, on the other hand, fell to the Prophet as no fighting or any involvement of the companions is in its acquisition.

Land of Khyber

The agricultural lands conquered by the Muslims from Khyber was handed back to original tillers because to maintain it properly and to get the proper yield. D.S Morgoliouth in his 'Muhammad and the Rise of Islam' writes, "Since it was not desirable that the Muslims, who would constantly be wanted for active service, should be settled so far from Madinah. Moreover, their skill as cultivators would not equal that of former owners of the soil. So he decided to leave the Jews in occupation on payment of half their produce"¹⁰ Hykal writes that, "the Jews of Khyber was thus treated differently from that of Banu Qainuqa and Banu Nadhir who were forced to evacuate their lands altogether. With the fall of Khyber, Jewish power no more threatened Islam or the Muslims. Moreover, Khyber had large area of orchards and groves of date trees whose maintenance needed an experienced labour force. Although al- Ansar, the Muslims of Madinah, were agriculturists, they were needed back home to tend their own gardens and orchards. The Prophet also needed his men for the purpose of war and could not afford to demobilise his army for the sake of agriculture. The Jews of Khyber were hence allowed to continue to work their own groves after their political dominion had been destroyed..."¹¹ The task of maintaining the accounts of the yield of Khyber was entrusted to Abdullah b. Rawaha

Status of the people of Khyber - Dhimmi

The Jews of Khyber were the first to receive the status of Dhimmi, members of a subject state, whose lives were to be guaranteed and in return they have to pay a ransom. History records that the Khyber has made the Muslims rich by providing material in abundance. The spoils of Khyber surpassed every other benefit that Allah had conferred on the Prophet writes Margoliouth¹² The benefits are in the form of gold and silver which they had been accumulating for many generations; vast herds of horses, camels, cattle; finest arms such as swords, spears, lances, bows, arrows, shields etc., and above all rich lands with palm groves as Khyber was having the richest oasis in the Hijaz

Estate of Fadak

Fadak was another Jewish settlement near Khyber. The people of Fadak voluntarily sent their representatives to the Prophet offering to negotiate the terms of surrender. Prophet accepted their offer and gave them the right to stay on their lands as subjects of the Islamic State. It was thus acquired without any effort on the part of the army of the Muslims. Therefore, it was considered to be the private property of the Prophet. The wealth of Khaybar was to be distributed among the members of the Muslim armed forces according to rule because they had fought to secure it. The wealth of Fadak, on the other hand, was the sole prerogative of Prophet, as no Muslims and no fighting were involved in its acquisition.¹³ The Quran testifies it as

وَمَا آفَاءَ اللَّهِ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا أَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلَا رِكَابٍ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

What Allah has bestowed on His Apostle (and taken away) from them for this ye made no expedition with either cavalry or camelry: but Allah gives power to His apostles over any He pleases: and Allah has power over all things.(59:6)

The verse basically refers to the property left by Banu Nadhir on their banishment from Madinah but its application is general, wherever such situation arises.

In case of Fadak neither cavalry nor troops mounted on camels were employed in the siege. In fact the enemy surrendered at the first onset. On this basis Prophet has exclusive right on the land of Fadak (59:6)

Poisonous meat

When Prophet satisfactorily returned after the conquest of Khyber, a roasted meat of a goat was brought before him by the wife of Salaam b. Mishkam as a meal in which poisonous substance was mixed Prophet on taking it found that it is poisonous stopped his companions to eat a meal but one of the companion, Bashir b. Barra b. Ma'arur, had already swallowed a piece of meat which caused his death. On enquiry the wife of ibn Mishkam, Zainab bint-i Harith accepted her crime, then she was put to death in Qisas of killing one of the companion ¹⁴

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Another Jewish Settlement

Prophet after successful conquest of Khyber met some more tribes of Jews at Wadi al- Qura and Taima. At the former site Jews of the place welcomed with arches and in retaliation many of them were killed and then they surrendered and the later on hearing the news of Khyber, Fadak and Wadi al- Qura submitted a peace treaty and it was accepted and a treaty was written for them by Khalid b. Said, a companion.¹⁵

Notes and References

- [1] 48:1
- [2] 48:20
- [3] (48:15) Mustafa Khattab in his translation note to the verse writes, "Those who pledged allegiance at Hudaibiyah were promised by Allah that the spoils of war obtained from the Tribe of Khaibar would be exclusively theirs."
- [4] **Tabari**
- [5] **Ibid**
- [6] Abdullah Yusuf Ali in a translation note to the said verse writes, "This part of the Sura is considered a prophecy. It may refer to the conquest of Khaibar. Khaibar is a Harat or volcanic tract, well-watered with many springs issuing from its basaltic rocks. It has a good irrigation system and produces good harvests of grain and dates in its wet valleys, while the outcrop of rocks in the high ground affords sites for numerous fortresses. In the holy Prophet's time there were Jewish colonies settled here, but they were a source of constant trouble especially after Siege of Madinah. It became a nest of all the hostile Jewish elements expelled for their treachery from elsewhere. Its capital, Khaibar, is about 90 miles due north of Madinah. Its inhabitants offered some resistance, and Hadhrat 'Ali, though he had just risen from a bed of illness, performed prodigies of valour. After its surrender, a land settlement was made, which retained the cultivators of the soil on the land, but brought them under control, so that no further focus of active hostility should remain near Madinah. The terms of the settlement will be found in Waqidi".
- [7] **Tabari**
- [8] Ibn-i Hisham, vol.2, p, 227
- [9] **Tabari**
- [10] D.S Morgoliouth, *Muhammad and the Rise of Islam*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York 27 -West Twenty Third street; London 24 -Bedford Street, Strand.1905, P.358
- [11] Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, New Crescent Publishing Company, Delhi, 2009, p. 371
- [12] D.S Morgoliouth, *Muhammad and the Rise of Islam*, op.cit, p.
- [13] Haykal. op.cit, p.
- [14] At first she was pardoned by the Prophet but later when a companion died and she was put to death in Qisas, that is why the narrations vary mentioning of her pardoned by the Prophet and then killing her.
- [15] cf, SafiurRahman Mubarakpuri, *Rahiq al- Makhtum*, Dawat al-Irshad, Aligarah, 1988, pp.590-91